DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 387 259 PS 023 619

AUTHOR Firlik, Russell J.
TITLE [What Can We Learn from the English Primary Schools? Questions and Answers from My Fulbright Administrative Exchange.]
PUB DATE [95]
NOTE 63p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; Cultural Differences; Discipline Policy; *Elementary Education; *Elementary School Curriculum; *Elementary Schools; Foreign Countries; Government Role; Mixed Age Grouping; Parent Participation; Professional Development; *School Administration; Student Evaluation; Teacher Education; *Teaching Methods; Track System (Education)
IDENTIFIERS *England (Leicester)

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the primary education system in England as a whole and the operation of primary schools in Leicestershire in particular. It also contains questions and answers concerning English primary education. The paper describes the organization, funding, and administration of English primary schools, which provide the first 6 years of compulsory education for pupils age 5 through 11 or 12. Part 1 provides a "macro profile" of English primary schools for children ages 5 to 11 years and a description of the demographic and cultural context of Leicestershire, England. Part 2 delineates American questions to be answered concerning primary school curriculum and instruction, grouping patterns and assessment, discipline and reward systems, exceptional education, professional development of teachers and administrators, and parent involvement. Part 3 presents the Fulbright exchange experience from a comparative researcher's educational and administrative perspective. A final section includes a synthesis of parts 1 and 2, and emphasizes the importance of not over-generalizing about any country's educational system. An appendix contains various curriculum materials. (MDM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 387 259

[WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE ENGLISH PRIMARY SCHOOLS? QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM MY FULBRIGHT ADMINISTRATIVE EXCHANGE] Russell J. Firlik

Questions and Answers from my Fulbright Admistrative Exchange to England: What can we learn from England's Primary Education System?

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

This article is a synthesis of my recent six week's Fulbright Administrative Exchange to Leicestershire, England. I describe and detail three facets of this up-close and personal study of primary education in Leiecestershire, England :

(1) A macro view of primary education in England and a micro look at Leicestershire, England where the Fulbright exchange research was conducted.

(2) An inquiry-based analysis of my research from questions elicited from American teachers, principals, parents, administrators, and teacher educators.

(3) Conclusions from the reflective position of both a novice comparative researcher and practicing public school administrator.

PART I: A Macro Profile of the Primary Schools (ages 5-11 years) in England: The Government of Primary Schooling.

Primary education in England is commonly taken to mean the first stage of compulsory education, beginning at age 5 and continuing until transfer to secondary education, normally at age 11 or 12.

An understanding of the English government's role in primary education is essential to the discussion of the present state-of-affairs in

PS 023619

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Russell J. Firlik
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

English primary schools. The line of authority for schooling and its quality stretches from the Secretary of State for Education at the government level to local education authorities, to school governing bodies. Each school has a governing body. The Secretary of State has ultimate responsibility to Parliament. The Department for Education (DFE) regulates such matters as the length of school sessions, school attendance, standards of school premises, the constitution and powers of governing bodies, school closures, and the number of teachers to be trained. The Secretary of State is aided in his statutory responsibilities by a politically independent body, Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI), whose functions include assessment of standards, provision of information about the condition of public education, identification and dissemination of "good practice" and provision of advice to those responsible for institutions and the system.

The Government and Funding Distribution

The central government receives taxes from industry, commerce and households- local property taxes and national taxation. The government distributes these monies to the local government, to Local Education Authority(LEA), which in turn distributes to schools. The headteacher and the governors are completely responsible for their funding allocation. Approximately 85-90 % of the funding goes to schools whereas the LEA holds the balance for training and advisement.

The Education Reform Act of 1988: The National Curriculum and Assessments

A deep economic recession in the 1980's lead to relatively high levels of unemployment in the United Kingdom. For parents being "in work" and the pressures of being "well educated" in order to achieve such employment became the ultimate goal of the society. Education became viewed as the panacea for many of society's problems. Enormous accountability pressures were put upon teachers. Teacher appraisal became a paramount issue at this time. It was inevitable that what was taught in the name of education also came under national scrutiny.

The concept of "equality of opportunity" for a nation's children was the foundation for the National Curriculum of England and Wales. The National Curriculum was conceived to provide not only equality of educational opportunity, but a broad, balanced, and relevant curriculum to all school aged children- 5-16 years - irrespective of where they live and who teaches them. The idea of an industrially and economically dominated curriculum was the goal, but the cost was a curriculum without consideration to students' individual learning styles, learning rates, needs, and dispositions- all normally deemed to be at the heart of early childhood practices.

The Educational Reform Act of 1988 defined the main structure of the national curriculum for all schools and the procedures for implementation. For all children aged 5-11, the curriculum was to be comprised of three core subjects (English, maths, and science) and six foundation subjects (history, geography, art, music, information/ technology, and physical education. Religious education is also required but not under this education act.

The national curriculum was conceived in four "Key Stages." Key Stage 1 (5-7 years) and Key Stage 2 (7-12 years) covers the primary curriculum. Attainment in the national curriculum is to be assessed at the end of each Key Stage, and the aggregate results for each school was to be published (League Tables). The nationwide program of assessment is controlled by the Schools Examination and Assessment Council (SEAC).

The British government has set clear goals for the educational system, committed to a curriculum-development model, (top-down- paper driven), a model of the primary curriculum (9 subjects) that was prevalent in senior schools at the end of the Victorian era. The government is proceeding with a teaching profession that feels undervalued and underpaid and is likely in need of qualified personnel. The curriculum, set in academic subjects, is, to a large degree, different from the child-centered approaches of organizing learning in primary schools. This was certainly true in a few authorities such as Leicestershire and Oxfordshire during the 60's and 70's. Presently, the program is becoming statutory in a piecemeal fashion; it has been revised three times already. Putting a vital curriculum together has been left to teachers who have very little time, training, and resources with which to act. The assessment and economic context in which management has to be accomplished are entirely foreign to traditional primary school cultures.

Summary

In England, schools are being encouraged to see themselves as manufacturers of educational produce (test scores at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2), and to see parents as consumers of this produce. Head teachers (Principals) may be seen as brokers holding a franchise to "sell" the national curriculum. Parents are to be encouraged to look for the "best buy," and schools must operate a system of "open enrollment." That is, a head teacher will not be able to turn away a child until the school meets a generous quota of students. Funding will be related largely to the number of students enrolled. A vigorous marketplace mentality has been encouraged.

Fulbright Exchange: A demographic and cultural context of Leicestershire, England

Now, we shall turn to a micro position with respect to my field research in primary school teaching and learning and their implications for American schools.

Leicestershire is at the very heart of England. Within the City of Leicester at its center, the county is divided between east and west by the valley of the River Soar. To the east is the beautiful rolling countryside where the local ironstone can be seen in many of the older buildings in villages and towns; much of the county east of Leicester, including the former county of Rutland, is rural and untouched by industry. By comparison, the undulating clay lands of west Leicestershire have

produced slow streams and a number of brick-built industrialized towns and villages. There is a spectatular large forest (Charnwood) in the north-west of the county. The total population is 325,000.

There are two universities in Leicestershire- One outside of the City of Leiecester at Loughborough, and the University of Leicester, in the city. The teacher education department at Leicester University has an excellent teacher preparation model and field based programs.

Leicester City is the major population area. Approximately one third of the county's total population is in Leicester City. In addition, its industries of hosiery, footwear and engineering are situated there. The economy is diversified with agriculture and market towns in the eastern part of the country.

Leicestershire is also diversified in its population, culture, religions, and races; nearly a quarter of Leicester City is populated by peoples of Asian and Afro-Caribbean origin.

The Leicestershire Educational Authority: The Central Headquarters

The County Council Education Authority for Leicestershire is responsible for the provision of primary (including nursery) and secondary education. The responsibility for providing sufficient and appropriate schools lies with the local education authority (LEA). A total of 441 schools serving 140,000 students make up L.E.A. There are 97 LEAs or school districts in England. The national average cost per student is L2,000 or $3,800 and in Leicestershire about $3,500 per student is allotted.

Presently, 90% of this total goes directly to the 441 schools to be managed at the local level. The balance is retained by the L.E.A.

Special Education or Special Education Needs (SEN)

Between 10-12 % of entire budget is spent on Special Education Needs. Approximately 2% of the 140,000 students are "statemented" or identified with legal Individual Education Programs (I.E.P.'s). The complete process from referral to service can take up to six months.

There are 20 Special Education Units based in regular schools serving children with moderate learning difficulties, sensory impairments, and speech and language issues. The schools receive additional funds for having such units in their buildings.

In Leicestershire Educational Authority, there are 18 Special Schools serving children with severe learning differences, physical disabilities, and emotional/social challenging students.

Preschool (Nursery Education) Provisions

Nursery education (part-time and full-time) is provided in virtually all the Infant (ages 5-7 years) and Primary Schools (ages 5-11 years) in the City of Leicester (population 275,000), and education at four years plus is in certain areas in the rest of the County.

However, only approximately 32 % of the four million 4 year olds in England attend preschool- (Moyles, '95).

Preschool age children (under five) with special needs are served

from age one until they reach school (age 5) through a scheme called the Portage Scheme (Named after an American who initiated this plan in the States). The scheme's feature is to train adults to visit homes and work with parents who have children with special needs. By all accounts this scheme is working extremely well in Leicestershire.

Part Two: American Questions to be Answered

One important mechanism of communicating to my American educational colleagues about the culture and operations within the English educational system was to encourage my colleagues to express to me what they would like to know about England's primary educational system. I opened the questioning to our elementary school teachers, principals, parents, and Central Office personnel. Unfortunately, I asked the Board of Education members to submit questions for my review while in England, but they did have the time to respond. After receiving over 135 inquiries, I selected those inquiries that appeared most often and dispose of repeats. In order to developed a manageable set of questions based upon what one American community wanted to know about English primary education, I clustered the questions into six categories: (1) Curriculum/Instruction (2) Grouping and Assessments (3) Discipline and reward system (4) Special Educational Needs (5) Staff Development (6) Parent Involvement in schools.

Furthermore, I provided the professors in the teacher education department at a small university an opportunity to pitch in with some of their

questions as well.

The following questions were posed by New Canaan (an affluent community 55 minutes from New York City), Connecticut teachers, principals, central office personnel, and parents. Teacher education questions were drawn from professors at Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut.

The ensuing responses evolved from several interviews and observations with Leicestershire's Local Education Authority officials, headteachers (principals), teachers, university professors, governors (consisting of elected and some appointed town/village officials), students, and parents of children attending primary schools in Leicestershire.

1. Curriculum and Instruction

Q-1. What curriculum areas are covered at each grade level?

A-1. There are nine compulsory subjects for the primary schools (ages 5-11 years). Three are core areas: English, mathematics, and science. These subject areas are tested nationally at Key Stage 1, at 7 years old, Key Stage 2, at 11 years old, Key Stage 3, at 14 years old, and at Key Stage 4, at 16 years. In addition, there are six foundation subjects: physical education, music, art, history, geography, information/technology. Religious education is also required, but by a previous educational act.

Q-2. How do they teach beginning reading?

A-2. They tend to utilize a variety of approaches. They use the Ginn reading scheme, as well as, other emerging reading programs with high interest trade books that support the National Curriculum. I found exceptional non-fiction books produced by Moonlight Publication and First Discovery Books, with such marvelous examples such as painting, clay, science etc, which supports the National Curriculum. Publishers must keep up with the National Curriculum demands and they have produced excellent beginning and advanced trade books. All books and levels of books (leveled by reading age) read by the children are recorded (reading logs) by the teachers. This is an on-going responsibility for the teachers.

Q-3. Do they use Reading Recovery?

A-3. The government initially funded Reading Recovery for most of England but withdrew funding before they actually got underway. This is very expensive program and individual schools may buy into this approach both they must do so with existing funds or must predetermine Reading Recovery funding into their next budget building phase. I did not observe any school with a Reading Recovery program.

Q-4. Do they use Whole Language?

A-4. No. In fact, they did not know of such a term for a philosophy of emergent literacy. Teachers use some resource elements from our "whole language" grab bag such as big books, core books and book sharing episodes. They perceive their language arts program, consisting of

speaking, listening, reading, writing, as a whole, by not separating these components. Interestingly, I did not observe any form of "process-stage writing" in the early primary school years.

Q-5. What type of mathematics curriculum do they use?

A-5. The National Curriculum dictates the curriculum experiences and skills expected for each stage/age. Schools purchase a commercial series, Ginn, which is quite appropriate for the National Curriculum demands. The mathematics schemes used are accompanied with games, graded levels of difficulty boxes of activities to meet the learning tasks indicated by the N.C. Teachers often supplement the National Curriculum mathematics experiences with teacher made games and activities for different ability and interest ranges.

Q-6. How are children educated in the Arts?

A-6. The National Curriculum lays down the curriculum in Art, Drama, Dance, Music, and physical education. Teachers with special talents help teach these areas within the school. Headteachers are particularly interested in hiring new teachers with special abilities and interests in the arts. Moreover, schools can purchase creative and performing arts specialists from outside the school to give performances and workshops to school children. Of course, the schools must have the funds available to use this option.

Q-7. How does instruction change over the years, i.e., preschool-to-elementary-to-middle-to-secondary?

A-7. A rather imposed instructional format is utilized because the subject area targets must be taught and later assessed (National Curriculum and Assessments). It use to be "doing" in the preschools and primary schools and "listening" in the secondary schools. But I observed too much listening and seat work in the primary schools. Within class grouping is the norm in the primary schools (ages 5-12 years). Mixed age classes, e.g., 5-7 year olds, allow for certain variability of instruction with the notion that the older children will assist the younger, and in some cases, the reverse was true.

Q-8. At what level do the children get a qualified art specialists?

Q-8. At the secondary level, Key Stage 3, or around 14 years of age.

Q-9. Do they still use or have they reinstituted the "eleven-plus" exams? How do teachers and students feel about that?

Q-9. In the past, the eleven plus examinations determined what career track students would pursue after primary school. However, the eleven plus has been eliminated in the 1980's. Moreover, in some progressive authorities it vanished in the 1970's. Now, at age 11, children must take the Key Stage 2- Standard Assessment Tests (SAT) in math, science, and English. These tests involve material learned from age 7 through age 11 years. In some schools, because the test results of each school are published in the League Tables, teachers have begun to "teach" for the

exam (Key Stage 2). However, the test results are not used for selection to specific career tracks as the 11+ did.

Q-10. Is the curriculum guided by mandated testing as the Connecticut Mastery Tests seems to be headed?

Q-10. Absolutely! Key Stage 1, administered to students at seven years of age, Key Stage 2, at eleven years, Key Stage 3, at fourteen years, and Key Stage 4, at sixteen years, are all based upon the material presented in the National Curriculum. Teachers use formative assessments as part of the summative assessment package.

Q-11. Are schools taking on responsibilities for teaching children things that were taught in the home 20 years age?

Q-11. Yes, indeed. This is especially evident in the instruction of social skills, acceptable behavior in groups and with adults. "Proper" eating behavior is monitored and guidance is provided, as appropriate. Having said that, I found very little challenging behavior or disrespectfulness from children. The lunchtime supervisors called "dinner ladies" sometime are on the front end of some "cheeky" behavior by the older children, however.

Q-12. How is creative writing taught?

A- 12. With the five and six year olds, teachers utilize the emergent writing scheme of - scribble writing, dictation in day books, etc. Creative writing might be from a single prompt or from children's individual choice. Most writing is related to the subject area or integrated with the subjects, e.g., maths and science and English. Mostly, there seems to be less emphasis

on different types of writing as opposed to more narrative and subject relationship writing was evident.

Q-13. Do they have an integrated curriculum or is each subject taught separately?

Q-13. The National Curriculum impinges on integrative topic (project) work. The emphasis, unfortunately, is on subjects to be covered and facts to be learned, and this approach has forced many teachers to be less integrative in their teaching presentations.

Q-13. Do English primary schools have many "non-academic" additions to the curricula?

Q-13. Only instrumental music during the school hours. Some lessons are before and after school when possible. Also, lunch time is used for lessons. Learning to swim, which is mandated by the National Curriculum, once a week during school time is often accomplished in the high school or community swimming pool.

Q-14. Do teachers feel "pressured" to accomplish a heavily loaded curriculum?

Q-14. The National Curriculum was not piloted by teachers before implementation. The N.C. was introduced and tested in one motion. Teacher input into the make-up of the curriculum content was nil. It was a political strategy by the Tory managed government to take control of education- both curriculum and instruction. A sorry state of affairs, I must admit.

Q-15. How does the variety of curriculum materials compare?

A-15. The non-fiction materials are fantastic. They contain a wide choice of books of interests related to the National Curriculum. The schools have limited amounts of materials available but those they have are very carefully utilized and maintained by children and teachers. Materials and supplies are always returned neatly to there proper places. Respect for these learning tools was very much evident.

Q-16. What type of scheduling do they use?

A-16. Initially, the National Curriculum stated that 20% of the teaching time had to be based on the National Curriculum. However, in reality, teachers could not cover the curriculum using only 20% of the week. When Sir Ron Dearing, who was recruited by the Tory's to help sort out their current ineffective educational situation, stated that " no time limits are to be set." In other words, teachers are trying to do the National Curriculum by compacting the curriculum and dividing subjects such as physical education and music to 1 hour per week. They are still trying to sort out this time and appropriate coverage phenomena.

2. Grouping patterns and Assessments

Q-1. What type of grouping or tracking patterns are used in elementary schools?

A-1. Many schools I visited have two age groups- mixed age grouping, e.g.,

5-7 and 7-9 years. Some schools even have three age spans, 9-11 years. The point is that within these groupings are extremely wide ranges of abilities, interests, and aptitudes. Therefore, in-class grouping for instruction is necessary. Some tracking or grouping by abilities was evident. This was observed in math and reading. Project work was a self-directed, hands-on investigative activity, engaging many ages and abilities working together. However, this topic work was limited to a Friday afternoons or when a special festive season was celebrated, for example, the May Day Celebration.

Q-2. Was there Evidence of Tracking or Grouping by Abilities?

A-2. Multi-age grouping in the primary schools: Ages 4/12 to 11/12 years - allows for and promotes a shared role in the teaching and learning process. There is almost always someone older or more mature in each class and teachers effectively use these build-in resources.

Q-3. Do they have and use benchmarks or standards for elementary schools?

A-3. Benchmarks and standards of expectation for primary school children (ages 5-12) are all established in the 9 subjects of the National Curriculum , along with SAT's or Standard Attainment Tests (assessments). For example, at age 11, children must take the Key Stage 2- Standard Attainment Tests- in math, science and English. This test involves material learned from age 7 through 11 years. Key Stages: 1-3, are the standard tests given to children at ages 7, 11, and 14 years, respectively. These

major exams are leveled 1-5- from growth is needed, to achieved mastery. It is expected that the average rate of progress would be to advance one further level with each two years of schooling.

Q-4. With respect to assessments, what is the length of the school day and year?

Q-4. The length of the school day is from 0900 hours to 15:15 hours or 9:00 to 3:15. There are three intakes for children who reach the age of 5, in August, January, and after Easter recess. This makes for a difficult time for teachers because they feel compelled to spend time with the new arrivals but must press on with the existing curriculum and the required on-going assessments.

The school calendar begins on or about 20 August for teachers-August 23rd for children. Children have 190 days of school and the school year concludes on or around the 30th of June. This calendar is unique for the Leicestershire Authority. It developed years ago due to the need for all factory workers to take a vacation around the same time. Nonetheless, the number of school days nationally is the same.

Q-5. Do each school systems make up a report card or does the Government make a common report card?

A-5. First of all, reporting to parents is mandatory. It is part of the National Curriculum and Assessment policy. A common report card is made up by the surrounding schools within the county. These "neighborhood" schools may not all be within the catchment(district) area of the same town or village. Most of the schools come together to make up the "Development

Group." This Development Group makes up unified report cards, develops inservice courses for teachers, and shares the resources within their respective towns or villages. It is a means to spread the school funds among several schools. The government, at the moment, has not developed a common report card.

3. Discipline and Reward Systems

Q-1. What type of discipline strategies do they use?

Q-1. Each school has a "Code of Conduct" which establishes the acceptable rules and routines regarding the school and school grounds and is followed to the letter. I did not observe any children being suspended from school. However, if a child is expelled for serious breech of the Code of Conduct, they must enroll in a nearby school.

Q-2. Is a sticker-type reward system used?

A-2. Yes, in a few schools, and with rather good results. During the required assembly, children were recognized for good deeds, compassionate behavior, and for out-side of school activities. Also, Cantor's Assertive Discipline was employed in a few schools as well. Generally, students are well behaved. At lunch recess, when the "dinner ladies" are in - charge of the playgrounds, some problems exist. Teachers are exempt from suprvisory duties and the dinner ladies are no match for a few student's challenging behaviors. When this happerns, the children could be reported

to the headteacher or deputy headteacher. The headteachers are still a force- not literally, but figuratively.

Q-3. Are English children similar/different from American children?

A-3. That was a difficult question due to my nationalist bias. But, I have found in my travels that children, by the nature of the learner, are competent, curious, and creative everywhere. Providing developmentally appropriate environments that are responsive to and sensitive of individual needs is the master key to unlock student interests and engagement. English children are rather passive. They are well behaved and follow routines exactly. Children learn very young how to queue, wait, and not to make a fuss. We need to justify why children are being silenced, not have to defend social interaction and active engagement in classrooms.

3. Exceptional Education: Provisions for Special Needs Education

Q-1. Are there special programs for obviously talented children in art, music, physical education?

A-1. No special programs or training are available. However, schools may buy into additional services if they choose; however, this rarely happens. I did witness a couple of children being moved to another age group because they were exceptionally gifted. Special talents may indeed be recognized at the all school assembly. Perhaps the English feel that this is enough recognition?

Q-2. How does the British system handle articulation disorders?

A.-2. The Health Services are actively involved with children with articulation disorders before they are five and arrive at school. Once in school, at age five, no articulation services are available. School could buy services if they choose. Remember, schools are site- based managed and they must budget for such situations. This is difficult because they do not know when a student may move into the school area or that a preschooler requires intensive treatment once they enter in primary school. This is a difficult funding position for headteachers.

Q-3. What is their referral procedure and is there parent involvement in the resolution of alternative learning styles?

A-3. Parent's permission is required before referral begins. There are four stages that the school must follow before special needs assistance is provided, if at all. The time table is within 6 months after stage 4. They have a rather comprehensive booklet entitled, "The Code of Practice," which sets out the procedures and entitlements for children and parents. Learning differences are viewed as part and parcel of the nature of the primary age learner.

Q-4 What kind of social work and psychiatric counseling service are offered?

A-4. For such services, the school, through the educational psychologist at the L.E.A., must justify the need. Also, the Social Services Department can

provide assistance, with extreme cases, as well. Sometimes students are expelled when a particular school and/or social services can not remedy the problem they typically go to another school.

Q-5. If child abuse cases are suspected, how are they handed by administration, what resources do they have at their disposal?

A- For suspected abuse cases, the head teachers go directly to Social Services prior to informing parents. Each school has an abuse officer and the procedures are spelled out very clearly. Since the "Childrens" Act" of 1991, abuse cases are a top priority but rarely reported by heads. Evidentially, Social Services are backed up so badly that they are of little use and provide limited follow-through.

Q-6. What kinds of social issues are they dealing with? If any at all?

A-6. Headteachers have confirmed the following issues within their school communities: alcohol, poverty, homelessness, single parent families, families in stress, misuse, especially by fathers, of entitlements and benefits, neglect, poor parenting skills, child abuse and incest.

Q-7. What practices relating to special education, i.e., organization of support services, identification, are available?

A-7.. The Local Educational Authority (school district) - has a few special schools for children with extreme (blind, physically disabled) special needs conditions. The Local Educational Authority also has an educational psychology service section that assesses, recommends, and trains.

teachers to provide services to children. The educational psychologist's do not provide direct services to children. When schools have the funds they might be able to purchase additional services from the LEA.

Q-8. What learning-based problems are recognizing and what resources are available for the students?

A-8. General low functioning children and those with obvious reading difficulties are recognized. Resource teachers, paraprofessionals, or parents may be employed on a full-time, part-time, or volunteer basis to assist with the teaching.

5. Professional Development for Teachers and Administrators

Q-1. What kind of staff development do they have? Who plans it? Who attends?

A-1. As part of their school budgets, heads and teachers must make out a three year professional development plan. It is automatically tied into their teachers' appraisal process. Teachers' are appraised (reviewed) every two years. If a teacher requires improvement or professional growth experiences, the funding must come from their professional development funds. The head and the teachers along with the governors work collaboratively on this process.

Q-2. Do staff members bring in speakers or use their own staff?

A-2 . Both, and it depends on which subject as well. Schools can buy

advisory services from the LEA - Local Educational Authority (School District) but they have to have the funds for such expenditures. I observed a far amount of staff development and professional activities either going on or being planned for the next year.

Q-3. Do they attend conferences out of their buildings?

A-3. Yes. They have a system called INSET (InService Education Training) - which outlines the inservice needs of the individual schools and the L.E.A. The district (L.E.A.) provides some inservice needs, and conferences. I attended a couple of these INSET conferences and they were quite comprehensive and detailed. However, they were mostly on management concerns like "Managing Quality Schools," Managing Governing Bodies," "School Effectiveness/Improvements," and "Reviewing reading/spelling."

Q-4. Do they meet with each other's schools/ other towns?

A-4. Yes. The Development Groups- school in the local area- work together to decide on courses and inservice needs. By working together, they spread the money out to accomplish more. The issues at the present time were: **"transitional slippage"**- why children regress from school levels to school levels- i.e., from Infant school- ages 5-7 years; to Junior school- ages 7-11 years; to high school- ages 11-14; and upper school- ages 14-18- , classroom management, and effective record keeping for assessments and evaluations..

Q-5. What support systems exist for administrators?

A-5. The administrators, head and deputy heads, have a strongly united

union called the NAHT or National Association for Head-Teachers. Also, they have some well developed conferences for heads. I attend one while in Leicester. There are no other support infrastructures for administrators. The LEA supports the head teachers with training and advice. Sometimes the heads must pay for these services. The headteaches are a resourceful group. They have a magazine called "HeadLamp" for heads to keep them up-to-date with the Government happenings. The heads have developed a "work shadowing team" for deputy heads who wish to become heads. They have just established a "mentor program" for newly appointed heads. At the moment, the heads are deciding to have a one-day strike because of large class sizes. Most parents and governors agree with heads on this one.

6. Parent Involvement in the education of their children

Q-1. How much homework is assigned and how big a part do parents play in encouraging children to do homework?

A-1." Spellings and Tables must be learnt each week." If the children do not learn them at school they must go home to be learned. Generally, parents encourage children to some degree, but are not very vigilant in keeping the children on task. Also, because of school's mixed-age classes, older children assist younger ones, and this an expectation. This is a nice family touch.

Q-2. How involved are parents in the schools- as volunteers, committee members?

A-2 . School need parents- They assist in reading, swimming, sewing, computers, cooking. Parents are involved, in part, due to the coverage expectations of the curriculum. Parents are utilized frequently and consistently in and outside of the classroom. I found little evidence to support that parents had any hidden agenda as a motive for being involved in classrooms. They were a very dedicated and reliable volunteer force.

Q- 3. What are the attitudes of students and parents towards education? For example, are the children eager to learn and willing to work hard to accomplish academic success?

A-3. Most parents that I interviewed did not really communicate to me that they valued education like New Canaan parents generally do. Parents leave the valuing -character building and motivation to the schools. Remember that religious instruction, assembly- 30 minutes of respect- is mandated in each school, every day. Generally, not much follow-through at home. You see, there is a real sense from both children and parents, that the future is slim at the end of education cycle, age 16 years, for most students in England. Only between 18-25% of students move onto post secondary education in this county (Leicestershire). Even college graduates are finding employment increasingly difficult at the moment. For example, last year, only 43% of the college graduates secured full-time employment in their area of training (T.E.S., 1995). The economy is in disarray and the hopemongers are getting fewer in numbers. Parents ask the schools only

these two questions: "Does s/he behave at school," and "Is s/he working as hard as s/he can?"

Q-4. How much input do parents have regarding the child's education in special needs, learning differences, ADD, ADHD, and other handicapping conditions?

Q-4. The Government publication for parents and schools entitled CODE OF PRACTICE is powerful, detailed and spells out the entitlements for both parent and student. Parents are involved from the get-go. However, Attention Deficit Disorder was unknown as a nerological disorder to the educators I spoke with in Leicestershire. They never heard of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Part III: What I Learned from my Fulbright exchange: From a comparative researcher's educational and administrator's perspective.

A. From this comparative educational research experience, I learned three important factors:

1. It is important to be sensitive not to over-generalize about an educational system of a country studied. Even though the United Kingdom operates from a centralized government, imposed educational position, each authority (district) and each school, even within the same authority, may vary to some degree.

2. It is important to be aware of and sensitive to the cultural

differences between the country studied and our own in terms of:

a). differing patterns of thinking;
b). differing cultural values and attitudes;
c). differing social mores and social conventions.

3. It is extremely important to interview and seek out as many of the constituents involved within the research area as possible in order to gain a more holistic, as well as, specific set of view points. This will ensure a more balanced and honest appraisal with which to draw final conclusions.

B. From a reflective Administrator's point of view, I learned the following:

1. A governmental imposed centralized educational system will not function properly or effectively without allowing the practitioners, at the school level, into the decision making process (from start to finish).

2. Children all over the world are unique individuals, and have individual needs that must be individually met. Therefore, the smaller the class size, the more individualized the teaching and learning can and should be.

3. Schools can not be operated as a business or factory with only assembly line- to- product outcomes. One must not measure the success of the sophisticated teaching/learning process by looking only at the final products.

4. Imposing too many mandated and developmentally inappropriate curriculum standards within specified attainment targets will take away valuable teaching time from the teacher and learning time from the children.

Moderation and balance would be a more effective and efficient route.

5. Parents have an important part to play in the child's education at home and school, thus, educators must form authentic partnerships with them and with the community at-large.

6. When developmentally inappropriate practices are used - due to time restraints and coverage of the National Curriculum- the results could have deleterious affects on the normal development and self confidence of children.

7. We should place more well written non-fiction books in the hands of young children. I found exceptional non-fiction- information oriented books for young children that were very interesting to young children.

8. The importance of up-to-date teacher in-service and teacher planning time. This is absolutely mandatory for teacher's continual renewal and inspiration. When teachers do not have time to plan together coverage tends to be the general objective and teachers can't establish thinking-relationship activities.

9. Children's playspace outdoors sends all kinds of messages to the children about the way the adults, in-charge, think about them in terms of attitudes, meanings and values. Too many of the playgrounds lacked any creative outlet because they were bound to small black-top areas. Children spent anywhere from one half to two hours each day outside.

10. We need to justify why children are being silenced, not defend it.

11. The entire school staff must be hopemongers for all children- if not, the teachers will lose their inspiration and desire to be successful

themselves.

12. Early Years (preschool education provisions) must be better supported within the transitions from preschool to elementary schools.

13. The British model for inspecting schools is based upon teaching, lessons to be taught, and the measurement of the product. Very little is mentioned concerning learning, learning pace, or learning styles. The inspection notion might have specific advantages for American schools if the model was designed to measure the learning process as well as the learning outcomes.

14. The Teacher education department at the University of Leicester is exceptional in is emphasis on and accommodation for play-based experiences throughout the subject oriented curriculum. An exciting graduate education program exists in Leicester University.

Teacher Education Questions from Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut.

1. Are there courses of study at the teacher preparation level that are directly related to classroom management and discipline strategies?

1-A. Not really. There is little time in the education program. There are 10 subjects (foreign language starting at age 12 years) that must be covered by the National Curriculum and this is where the major course work is concentrated. The N.C. consumes most of the teacher's teaching time in classes. There is one day of course work related to classroom management

and discipline. Such content is related mostly to theories. Other seminars on classroom management are on-going throughout the course of study. Also, if students wish to study classroom management on their own they can study this area with an independent study provision.

2. Tell me about the field based experiences for teachers in training?

2-A. There are several options of study and experiences in schools. There is the age 3-8, Year course; a 3-5, Year course; a 7-11, Year course. Basically, they spend 3 to 4 weeks in schools and 2 to 3 weeks in classes throughout the year. This is the orientation for the entire year of study. Students have examinations and final papers. Course tutors visit their students at school once a week and student's pick-up on tutor lessons.

3. How does this field-based practice change from year to year?

3-A. This student teaching pattern had been revised about five years ago . They have found that this field practice pattern is working the well for students, schools, and course tutors. They students I interviewed loved the contact time with tutors becasue it was concurrent with the school practice.

4. Do the expectations (for the students) change from year to year?

4-A. The National Curriculum has shifted the emphases from such aspects as - play and the curriculum and environmental education- to subject

orientation- art, history, geography, music, English, mathematics, science, information/technology, physical education, and religious education. The shift has been from process education to product education with a heavy concentration devoted to assessments and evaluation. This is what the government has set up for school teachers and the university teacher education program must conform to this orientation at both the under and graduate levels.

5. Prof. Moyles, how does "play" and learning integrate into the course work. *Side note: Janet Moyles, Senior Lecturer, is one of the leading international authorities on play and its value for young children. Her books are used in many teacher education programs throughout the United Kingdom.*

5-A. Throughout the master's degree program, play- based seminars are integrated into all the subject course work. The University of Leicester's teacher education department is unique with its strong message of the importance of play for young children. Janet Moyles believes that everything can be learned through play, but this is not enough for inexperienced teachers. Students may further concentrate on play-based learning as an optional independent study course.

6. Are there courses of study in special needs and parent education?

6-A. The education component in the post- B.A. degree course is training as a regular education teacher. Subsequent optional courses in special needs are available. But, first one is trained as a primary teacher. There is no post graduate degree for special education needs. There are modular degree

programs in educational psychology at the post master's degree stage. The master's degree program is made up of 30 hours of theory- 30 hours of practice in schools- 30 hours of application of theory and practice in seminars and special projects with tutors and students. Within these classroom hours there are 5 additional modules to choose. Parent and community courses are not available in the clinical sense but students bring questions into class for discussion and debate based upon their field experiences.

7. Which courses of study are mandated or required by all teachers in teacher education courses?

7-A. Before being accepted for matriculation in the post-graduate course, students must successful complete 2 modules in general course work before acceptance into the masters or doctoral program. The students enter into a post graduate program as a result of a quality level secondary school record and they exit with a post-graduate degree.

Resources and Contacts

Fulbright resources for research facts- Leicestershire, England

1. Days in England= 45

2. People and Agencies Interviewed while in England:

Teachers, Headteachers, governors, Parent Associations, students, professors & senior lectures in teacher education department. (Univ. of Leicester), L.E.A. (District Office) each member (14) of staff at the L.E.A., including the Director, Mrs. Jackie Strong, community members, HOME START volunteers, former Inspectors of Schools- Senior Primary Advisors, and university ed. students (M.Ed.).

3. Observations and study in the following institutions (throughout the County of Leicestershire) comprised the data for my research:

5 visits to Infant Schools- ages 4-7 years
7 Village Schools (student population under 200)
3 Inner City Schools with populations over 500
15 days in Ibstock Junior School (ages 7-11 years)
Attended 13 lectures at the Univ. of Leicester- Dept. of Ed.

Lectured to graduate students of ed. and to univ. dept. of ed.personnel
8 staff meeting "talks" at five different schools
2 visits to HOME START Schemes- an early intervention program for young families, with preschoolers, who are under stress.
1 Headteachers' Conference
1 Visit to Upper School- ages 11-14 years
3 Governor's meetings
All day visit to L.E.A. to learn about the macro culture of the entire LEA (District)
5 visits to Infant Schools- ages 4-7 years

References

Department of Education and Science. 1992. SCHOOLS NEED GOVERNORS,London, England.

Department for Education. 1994. SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS. Central Office of Information, London, England.

Department for Education. 1994. CODE OF PRACTICE, Central Office of Information, London, England.

Department for Education. 1995. NATIONAL CURRICULUM. HMSO, London, England.

Leicestershire Education Department. 1995. "Education Units Working Together, Leiecestershire County Council, Leicester Department of Education.

Moyles, J., Interviewed, April and May of 1995. Senior Lecturer, University of Leicester, Department of Teacher Education, Leceister, England.

Times Educational Supplement, 1995. Blackburne, L. "Call for National Work Experience Strategy. " London, England.

Woodhead, C. 1995. "Education: The elusive engagement and the continuing frustration." Annual Lecture, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England, The Royal Society of Arts, London, England.
Firlik, R. 1980. Display as a Teaching Strategy. CHILDHOOD EDUCATION-ACEI 3 (3): 13-18.

What can we learn form the English Primary Schools? Thoughts following a Fulbright Administrative Exchange

This article is the synthesis of my recent six week's Fulbright Administrative Exchange to Leicestershire, England. I shall describe three aspects of this inquiry-based experience: (1) A macro view of primary education in England; (2) A field - based micro analysis of my comparative teachings and learning research; (3) Conclusions from the position of both a novice comparative researcher and a practicing public school administrator.

PART I: A Macro Profile of the Primary Schools (ages 5-11 years) in England; The Government of Primary Schooling.

Primary education in England is the first stage of compulsory education, beginning at age 5 and continuing until transfer to secondary education, normally at age 11 or 12 years.

An understanding of the English government's role in primary education is essential to the discussion of the present state-of-affairs in English primary schools. The line of authority for schooling and its quality stretches from the Secretary of State for Education at the government level to local education authorities, to school governing bodies. Each school has a governing body. The Secretary of State has ultimate responsibility to Parliament. The Department for Education (DFE) regulates such matters as the length of school sessions, school attendance, standards of school premises, the constitution and powers of governing bodies, school

closures, and the number of teachers to be trained. The Secretary of State is aided in his statutory responsibilities by a politically independent body, Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI), whose functions include assessment of standards, provision of information about the condition of public education, identification and dissemination of "good practice" and provision of advice to those responsible for institutions and the system.

The Government and Funding Distribution

The central government receives taxes from industry, commerce and households- local property taxes and national taxation. The government distributes these monies to the local governments, to the Local Education Authority (LEA), which in turn distributes to schools. The headteacher and the governors are completely responsible for the funding allocation. Approximately 85-90 % of the funding goes to schools whereas the LEA holds the balance for training and advisement.

The Education Reform Act of 1988: The National Curriculum and Assessments

A deep economic recession in the 1980's lead to relatively high levels of unemployment in the United Kingdom. For parents, being "in work" and the pressures of being "well educated" in order to achieve employment became the ultimate goal of the society. Education became viewed as the panacea for many of society's problems. Enormous accountability pressures were put upon teachers. Teacher appraisal became a paramount issue at this time. It was inevitable that what was taught in the

name of education also came under national scrutiny.

The concept of equality of opportunity for a nation's children was the foundation for the National Curriculum of England and Wales. The National Curriculum was conceived to provide not only equality of educational opportunity, but a broad, balanced, and relevant curriculum to all school aged children- 5-16 years - irrespective of where they live and who teaches them. The idea of an industrially and economically dominated curriculum was the goal, but the cost was a curriculum without consideration to students' indivdiual learning styles, learning rates, and dispositions- all normally deemed to be at the heart of early childhood practices.

The Educational Reform Act of 1988 defined the main structure of the national curriculum for all schools and the procedures for implementation. For all children aged 5-12, the curriculum was to be comprised of three core subjects (English, maths, and science) and six foundation subjects (history, geography, art, music, information/technology, and physical education). Religious education is also mandated but as a result of previous education act.

The National Curriculum was conceived in four "Key Stages." Key Stage 1 (5-7 years) and Key Stage 2 (7-12 years) covers the primary curriculum. Attainment in the National Curriculum was to be assessed at the end of each Key Stage, and the aggregate results for Key Stage 2 in each school was to be published (League Tables). A nationwide program of assessment is controlled by the Schools Examination and Assessment Council (SEAC).

The British government has set clear goals for the educational system, committed to a curriculum-development model, (top-down- paper driven), a model of the primary curriculum (9 subjects) that was prevalent in senior schools at the end of the Victorian era. The government is proceeding with a teaching profession that feels undervalued and underpaid and is likely in need of qualified personnel. The curriculum, set in academic subjects, is, to a large degree, much different from the child-centered, integrated day of the 1960's and 1970's. This was certainly true in a few authorities such as Leicestershire and Oxfordshire. Presently, the program is becoming statutory in a piecemeal fashion; it has been revised three times already. Putting a vital curriculum together has been left to teachers who have very little time, training, and resources with which to act. The assessment and economic context in which management has to be accomplished are entirely foreign to traditional primary school cultures.

Summary

In England, schools are being encouraged to see themselves as manufacturers of educational produce (test scores at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2), and to see parents as consumers of this produce. Head teachers (Principals) may be seen as holding a franchise to "sell" the national curriculum. Parents are to be encouraged to look for the "best buy," and schools must operate a system of "open enrollment." That is, a head teacher will not be able to turn away a child until the school meets a generous quota of students. Funding will be related, largely to the number of students enrolled. A vigorous marketplace mentality has being

encouraged.

PART II: Firlik's Fulbright Research: A demographic and cultural context of Leicestershire, England

Now, we shall turn to a micro position with respect to my field research in teaching and learning and their implications to American schools.

Leicestershire is at the very heart of England. Within the City of Leicester at its center, the county is divided between east and west by the valley of the River Soar. To the east is the beautiful rolling countryside where the local ironstone can be seen in many of the older buildings in villages and towns; much of the county east of Leicester, including the former county of Rutland, is rural and untouched by industry. By comparison, the undulating clay lands of west Leicestershire have produced slow streams and a number of brick-built industrialized towns and villages. There is a spectatular large forest (Charnwood) in the north-west of the county. The total population is 325,000.

There are two universities in Leicestershire - One outside the city at Loughborough, and Leicester University, in Leicester City. The teacher education department at Leicester University has an excellent teacher preparation model and field based program.

Leicester City is the major population area. Approximately one third of the county's total population is in Leicester City. In addition, its industries of hosiery, footwear and engineering are situated there. The economy is diversified with agriculture and market towns in the eastern part of the

country.

Leicestershire is also diversified in its population, culture, religions, and races; nearly a quarter of Leicester City is populated by peoples of Asian and Afro-Caribbean origin.

During the 1960's - 1980's, the Leiecestershire education authority was internationally recognized as one of the exemplary models for child-centered practices in all of the United Kingdom.

The Leicestershire Educational Authority: The Central Headquarters

The County Council Education Authority for Leicestershire is responsible for the provision of primary (including nursery) and secondary education. The responsibility for providing sufficient and appropriate schools lies with the local education authority (LEA). A total of 441 schools serving 140,000 students make up the L.E.A. There are 97 LEAs or school districts in England. The national average cost per student is £ 2,000 or $3,800 and in Leicestershire about $3,500 per student is allotted. Now, 90% of this total goes directly to the 441 schools to be managed at the local level. The balance is retained by the L.E.A. for training and advice to schools.

Special Education or Special Education Needs (SEN)

Between 10-12 % of entire budget is spent on Special Education Needs. Approximately 2% of the 140,000 students are "statemented" or identified with legal Individual Education Programs (I.E.P.'s). The complete

process from referral to service can take up to six months.

There are 20 Special Education Units based in regular schools serving children with moderate learning difficulties, sensory impairments, and speech and language issues. The schools receive additional funds for having such units in their buildings.

In Leicestershire Educational Authority, there are 18 Special Schools serving children with severe learning differences, physical disabilities, and emotional/social challenging students.

Preschool (Nursery Education) Provisions

Nursery education (part-time and full-time) is provided in virtually all the Infant (ages 5-7 years) and Primary Schools (ages 5-11 years) in the City of Leicester (population 275,000), and education at four years plus is in certain areas in the rest of the County.

However, only approximately 32 % of the four million 4 year olds in England attend preschool- (Moyles, '95).

Preschool age children (under five) with special needs are served from age one until they reach school (age 5) through a scheme called the Portage Scheme (Named after an American who initiated this plan in the United States). The scheme's feature is to train adults to visit homes and work with parents and children who have special needs. By all accounts, this scheme is working extremely well in Leicestershire.

U.S.A. and U.K. Exchange Research Design:

A Micro View

I based my research on the observations of a five year (1989-1994) exchange program involving teacher education students from the State University of New York at Fredonia, and Devon Education Authority, Devon, England. (Marion Fox Barnett, 1995).

Summary of the Research : United States teachers' comments regarding United Kingdom classrooms

In English primary schools:

1. Motivation to learn is intrinsic.
2. Teachers never seem to teach but children are learning from each other.
3. Children help each other learn.
4. Children very independent and creative in oral expression and formulate many questions for which they must seek answers. Rather self-directed learners.

The six common remarks from United Kingdom teachers regarding United States teaching.

In American elementary classrooms:

1. More emphasis on subject orientation rather than integrated curriculum- this leads to fragmentation of the curriculum.

2. The clock becomes the focus of the day- not allowed time to follow-up an idea or hypothesis.

3. Is content loaded. The preschool (kindergarten) child entering the first grade has no time to make transfer or build relationships. This especially

apparent for half-day kindergartens.

4. External rewards are emphasized. There is a competitive cultural among students.

5. Teachers are unable to work and plan cooperatively.

6. There is whole class control- little consideration for individual abilities and interests.

I used these observational results as part of my study while visiting seventeen schools in Leicestershire. Ironically, my research resulted in just about the reverse of the above. What I observed in most English schools was what the U.K. teachers perceived of U.S. practices. The only similarity in the U.K. perceptions of U.S. teachers was a lack of competition and rewards as dominant reason for learning. I decided to validate these findings with my own criteria for observations. I formulated the "Firlik's - Classroom Observational Focus Tool." I looked at nine classroom/school elements to justify the more global results of the research: (1) Rhythm of the day; (2) The teacher's role; (3) Discipline/management; (4) Assessment of Children; (5) Subject versus child centered; (6) Competition and collaboration; (7) Display; (8) Textbook domination; (9) Headteacher's role.

1. Rhythm of the day: Such episodes as- breaks, fragmentation of the day, clock watching, planning time together, reward system, physical release.

My Observations- The rhythm of the day is rather fragmented- Children arrive at 9:00 and enter the class. Teachers take roll, collect lunch money, talk awhile, and get ready for mandated assembly. Assembly lasts about

30 minutes. If assembly is at the end of the day, then children get started on their work by 9:15. At 10:15, all children go outside with paid supervisors, not teachers, (even in the rain) until 10:30 ish. Children enter and begin work by about 10:45. Children work until 12:00 or 12:10. Hot meal buyers go to the hall first while bag lunchers come in to the hall after hot meal buyers are finished. Most children were outside in 10 or 15 minutes. Lunch recess is until 1:00 ish. Children may have P.E., Music, or Art in the afternoon but it is delivered by their own teacher. School in finished by 3:15. Generally, I rarely observed extended periods of engaged work by children. Perhaps in the age group of 10's and 11's year olds there were some periods of engaged project work. When this was observed, the project had something to do with a National Curriculum subject. Teachers were very aware of the clock and clock watching was evident.

Planning time for teachers was basically after school. I rarely observed teachers planning together during their coffee break at 10:15 or at lunchtime. Teachers stayed after school or planned at home. Children were generally well behaved- a cultural behavior, no doubt. Teachers just do not let loud noise or disruptive behavior start in classrooms. Rewards (stickers) are earned by children for doing outstanding work, helping in the community, or preforming in an athletic competition either in or out of school. At assembly, the heads announce and praise good behavior and student's are recognized. Also, some Bible lesson may be presented by the headteacher as part of religious education mandate.

2. Teacher's role: whole class teaching, formal approaches,

time keeper, curriculum and subject relationship.

My Observations- There is certainly a drive to teach to the National Curriculum and cover the content suggested in the N.C. Because of the mixed-age grouping of children and the wide ability and interest levels in classes of 25-30 children, within-class grouping was evident. I did not observe much whole group teaching. If this was observed it was with 10-11 year olds, or the top age group within the primary school. Children were presented with workbooks and ditto sheets. They call this strategy, "holding activities" - I call it busy work. The National Curriculum is taught by subjects with little integration of other subjects or relationship-thinking techniques utilized. Time is always a factor to deal with and to reconcile.

3. Discipline/ class control: reinforcement control, rewards, over use of praise ,use of encouragement statements, ordered-tidy classroom.

My Observations- "Control" was evident. The only misbehavior I observed was in the playground where "dinner ladies" are supervisors. I observed little over use of praise but large amounts of encouragement statements. For example, "Colleen, you worked very hard on matching these colors, didn't you?" Rewards on papers were minimal. Classrooms were ordered and tidy. The children were very obedient and compliant. I was a little nervous about the lack of spunk and spontaneity which is natural for young children. The Victorian social convention that children are meant to be seen but not heard is ever present.

4. Assessing children: types of assessment, informal, formal,

authentic-performance assessments, formative and summative assessments.

My Observations- Assessments are on-going to the point of an obsession with teachers. They are assessing, informally and formally, because the mandated prescriptions of the National Curriculum. Moreover, along with the National Curriculum, there are National Assessments at each Key Stage. For example, at the end of Year Two, or age seven, children are assessed with the Key Stage exams in Science, Math and English. The same is true at the end of age 11, 14, and 16. In between these national exams, teachers are expected to assess informally- These are called the Standard Attainment Tests (S.A.T.s). There are 10 levels, with mastery being the highest, and progress is measured stage-by- stage or level- by- level. The teacher is recording and "testing" children, one- on -one everyday. The parents are provided written feedback of performance at the end of each term or 12 weeks. At the end of Key Stages (ages 7, 11, 14, 16) results are given to parents and a set of league tables - results of the tests for each schools - are published in the local newspapers. The Government expects that badly performing schools will lose children because parents will "opt-out" for another school the is performing better. But when I asked parents about this right to "opt-out" they just looked at me and said, "This is our neighborhood school (or our village school) and we want our children close by- anyway, the other schools (if there are any nearby) don't have any room and class sizes are too large." Parents can take their children to another school outside their catchment area (district)

if there is available room in that school of their choice and must provide transportation. The schools around the country have just finished their first KEY STAGE ONE exams. Teachers told me that they loved the authentic performance assessments initially but had to stop them because it took so long to do them with every child they had no time left to teach. Remember that some classes have 28-33 children to assess. The Government heard the teacher's cries and went to paper/ pencil testing for the KEY STAGE TESTS. They are externally scored with just the results coming back to the schools. I observed boxes and boxes of informal and formal assessments for each child. Teachers spend any "free" time from the N.C. recording progress of each child.

5. Subject vs child centered: the child's placement in the organization, and is the child a co-constructor of learning along with the teacher?

My Observations- It is truly subject centered. This is a total contrast to my previous 25 years of experience with the very progressive child-centered nature of the English system. The governments of Maggie Thatcher and John Major - the Torys - has developed a market economy where competition for performance is very much what schools are about at the moment. The children who suffer the most are children with special needs, slower learning rates, tactile and kinesthic learners, and children at the extremes- gifted and remedial learners. The teaching, pretty much, is geared to the middle. Nonetheless, the children appear happy and appreciate school. Most teachers are very kind and considerate to children.

The teachers never ask for or even piloted the National Curriculum and Assessments. They were told to do them or quit- many progressive child-centered head teachers and teachers did indeed quit, unfortunately.

6. Competition vs. collaboration-

My Observations- Because of the grouping organization in most schools, i.e., multi-aged or family-style 5-7; 7-9, 9-11's, there was more collaboration among children. We might call this form of grouping for instruction, "cooperative learning," but we have certain essential elements for cooperative learning to work effectively such as assigned roles and responsibilities and expected social skills. In England, children help other children to be nice and compassionate to each other - It is really like a family because children stay with the same teacher at least two years. Competition was observed only is how much something cost. For example, a beautiful fossil or semi-precious rock is looked at not from a geological/ historical view but, "how much is it worth," point of view. Also, the children are crazy about their football or soccer team. There is always competitiveness about who they support and why. From my perspective, there was too much emphasize on football and the competition it fosters. Many serious and violent incidents happen at soccer matches in England and children are very aware of this "crowd behavior" and the negative actions from their heroes.

7. Display and physical environment-

My Observations: The presentation of children's work and the purpose of

display is still rather good. Several years ago, I wrote an article about school display in England (Firlik, 1980), and recently my wife and I published an article about Italian display in Reggio Emilia (Firlik, Firlik, 1993) because we were so very impressed with the similarities both countries used in terms of approaches, techniques, purposes, and the role of the children in display work. Unfortunately, I am seeing more "wall-papering" of children's unmounted work, and too much commercial "bulletin-board" stuff in English classrooms. The heads tell me that's the only way to cover up the cracks in the walls - to wall paper them with display, I ask? However, some attractive and purposeful display was observed, especially in the inner city schools where multi-cultural-ethnic-religious displays were rather impressive.

The physical environments are attractively maintained if the heads spend their money on the interior. The funding for schools in England since the Education Act of 1989 goes something like this: The Government allots "X" amount of money per school based upon number of children, size of school, number of classroom, and children with special needs. The heads, teachers, parents, and Governors (Board of Ed) made up of parents, elected officials from the community and teacher representation, decide how the money is to be spent when the Gov't sends the next year's budget in April- What timing! The interior and exterior of the school must be maintained by these funds. If the roof caves in or the boiler breaks then the L.E.A. or Local Ed. Authority (School District's - Central Office) attempts to pay for services. This is a long drawn-out process. Remember the new funding formula takes money from the L.E.A. and gives it straight to the

schools to manage (about 90% to schools and 10% to L.E.A.'s). Before 1989, the L.E.A.'s controlled the money to schools. Schools must now manage their budget. So if schools want to spend money for interior work, they can. If they want to spend money on grounds they can. But they must budget for it and with less money each year and increasing enrollment, less and less money is going for painting and outside ground keeping.

The playgrounds are generally lacking anything purposeful or meaningful for children. Most children are playing on cement. Very small spaces are available because more and more portable or "mobiles" are being used due to increases in enrollment. Also, if schools have grassy areas, and many do, they are often too wet for children to play on them. A new phenomena has raised it ugly head in England and it is called "litigation." So "heads" are very sensitive to and cautious about safety and health considerations.

8. Textbook dominated vs other means of learning-

My Observations: The English schools are dominated by the National Curriculum and Assessments. The book publishers are making a windfall on materials to teach to the N.C. There are a number of reading and math schemes (programs) like Ginn, Macmillian, and Heinnerman, that offer similar workbook experiences for children. It is not that these tools are ineffective, it is always how they are used. It appears that all too often they are used in isolation ("holding activities") and without any follow through by the teacher. Children progress individually by completing the pages.

Teachers try to check everyone's work, but many utilize older children to check younger children's work. I have mixed feeling about this method, however. I found some well planned activities related to the May Day Celebration and community history. I also observed some misrepresentations of Columbus and his alleged discoveries. Since these are subject contents required by the National Curriculum and Assessments, some interesting investigative and community activities were evident. Nonetheless, little art work or first hand-interpretive experiences were observed. I observed little or no environmental studies even when the schools built ponds and rock gardens on their school grounds? The National Curriculum and Assessments have dictated a particular "coverage" teaching approach and rather passive learning format. Teachers are very reluctant to go off course. This has meant that discovery learning and in-depth projects based upon children's interests are rarely to be found in the primary schools (ages 5-11 years) of Leicestershire schools. This is one of the many reasons that made Leicestershire schools internationally famous during the 60's -70's -80's and one of the few very progressive - child centered school systems (authorities) in the United Kingdom. Most, if not all, of this education based upon the development needs and interests of children has disappeared and their is no ethos for change, anywhere in Leicestershire.

9. Head teacher's role vs principal's role-

My Observations: As an administrator for over twenty years in four

countries, this is an area where I obviously spent most of my time and thoughts. The many head teachers I interviewed and observed are mostly managers. Managers of the budget, curriculum, assessments, special needs concerns. They manage their working relationships with governors and parents. Now headteachers must manage an appraisal system of teachers, heretofore, virtually an unknown job requirement. Some of the heads in village schools with under 100 children enrolled do some part time teaching because they do not have the money to employ a full time teacher and they have it the worst. These heads have all the same responsibilities and roles as the non-teaching heads in addition to a teacher role. Heads take short courses in managing the school, managing quality, managing the budget, managing special needs children, managing Governors, and managing school effectiveness. Few courses are available for heads or for teachers, concerning children' self esteem or how children learn. Some heads in the larger schools are relatively well paid- when they can negotiate a pay raise with their Governors. A few village heads told me that they have not had a pay raise in five years. The reason is that they just could not take the monies available in the budget away from the children or supplies to ask for a pay raise for themselves. A sad case indeed. Other than that, heads play the same roles as principals in the United States.

Sometimes headteachers are initiators of something new, like technology aided instruction, and other times responders- to a teachers new idea or strategies, e.g., a shorten version of an assessment instrument, but mostly headteachers are managers.

Furthermore, heads are respected very much in their communities- partly because they are paid rather well and because schools are a business and the heads are the CEO's hired by the Governors and LEA's. Heads have the right to hire deputy heads and teachers with the support of the Governors. Heads work the same number of days as teachers, 193. However, most heads work at school sometime during the term breaks- but all of them take off during the summer to get away from all the stress.

Part III: What I Learned from my Fulbright exchange: from a comparative researcher's and administrator's point of view.

A. From this comparative educational research experience, I learned three important factors:

1. It is important to be very sensitive not to over-generalize about an educational system of a country studied. Even though the United Kingdom operates from a centralized government - imposed educational position- each authority (district) and each school, even within the same authority, may vary to some degree.

2. It is important to be aware of the cultural differences between the country studied and our own in terms of:

a). differing patterns of thinking;
b). differing cultural values and attitudes;
c). differing social mores and social conventions.

3. It is extremely important to interview and seek out as many of the

constituents involved within the research area as possible in order to gain a more holistic, as well as, specific set of view points. This will ensure a more balanced and honest appraisal with which to draw final conclusions.

B. From a reflective Administrator's point of view, I learned the following:

1. A governmental imposed centralized educational system will not function properly or effectively without allowing the practitioners, at the school level, into the decision making process (from start to finish).

2. Children all over the world are unique individuals, and have individual needs that must be individually met. Therefore, the smaller the class size, the more individualized the teaching and learning can and should be.

3. Schools can not be operated as a business or factory with only assembly line- to- product outcomes. One must not measure the success of the sophisticated teaching/learning process by looking only at the final products.

4. Imposing too many mandated and developmentally inappropriate curriculum standards with attainment targets, takes away valuable teaching time from the teacher and learning time from the children. Moderation and balance would be a more effective and efficient route.

5. Parents have an important part to play in the child's education at home and school, thus, educators must form authentic partnerships with them and with the community at-large.

6. When developmentally inappropriate practices are used - because of time restraints and coverage of the National Curriculum- the results can have deleterious affects on the normal development and self confidence of children.

7. We should place more well written non-fiction books in the hands of young children. I found exceptional non-fiction- information oriented books for young children that were very interesting to children.

8. The importance of up-to-date teacher in-service. This absolutely mandatory for teacher's continual renewal and inspiration.

9. Children's playspace outdoors sends all kinds of messages to the children about the way the adults, in-charge, think about them in terms of attitudes, meanings and values.

10. We need to justify why children are being silenced, not defend it.

11. The entire school staff must be hopemongers for all children- if not, the teachers will lose their inspiration and desire to be successful themselves.

12. Early Years (preschool education provisions) must be much better supported within the transitions from preschool to elementary schools.

13. The British model for inspecting schools is based upon teaching, lessons to be taught, and the measurement of the product. Very little is mentioned concerning learning , learning pace, or learning styles. The inspection notion might have specific advantages for American schools if the model was designed to measure the learning process as well as the learning outcomes.

14. The Teacher education department at the University of Leicester is exceptional in is emphasis on and accommodation for play-based experiences throughout the subject oriented curriculum.

Resources

Fulbright resources for research facts- Leicestershire, England

1. Days in England= 45

2. People and Agencies Interviewed while in England:

Teachers, Headteachers, governors, Parent Associations, students, professors & senior lectures in teacher education department. (Univ. of Leicester), L.E.A. (District Office) each member (14) of staff at the L.E.A., including the Director, Mrs. Jackie Strong, community members, HOME START volunteers, former Inspectors of Schools- Senior Primary Advisors, and university ed. students (M.Ed.).

3. Observations and study in the following institutions (throughout the County of Leicestershire) comprised the data for my research:

5 visits to Infant Schools- ages 4-7 years
7 Village Schools (student population under 200)
3 Inner City Schools with populations over 500
15 days in Ibstock Junior School (ages 7-11 years)
Attended 13 lectures at the Univ. of Leicester- Dept. of Ed.
Lectured to graduate students of ed. and to univ. dept. of ed. personnel
8 staff meeting "talks" at five different schools
2 visits to HOME START Schemes- an early intervention program for young families with preschoolers who are under stress.
1 Headteacher's Conference
1 visit to Upper School- ages 11-14 years
3 Governor's meetings
All day visit to L.E.A. to learn about the macro culture of the entire LEA (District)
5 visits to Infant Schools- ages 4-7 years

References

Barnett, M.F. 1995. Unpublished five-year research shared with me in January.

Coe, J. 1995. Interviewed April-May 1995. Former, Primary Advisor, Oxfordshire Educational Authority.

Department of Education and Science. 1992. SCHOOLS NEED GOVERNORS,London, England.

Department for Education. 1994. SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS. Central Office of Information, London, England.

Department for Education. 1994. CODE OF PRACTICE, Central Office of Information, London, England.

Department for Education. 1995. NATIONAL CURRICULUM. HMSO, London, England.

Firlik, R. 1980. Display as aTeaching Strategy. CHILDHOOD EDUCATION-ACEI 3 (3): 13-18.

Firlik, E., Firlik, R. 1993. The Role of Display in Reggio Emilia, Italy Preschools. HOLISTIC EDUCATION REVIEW 6 (4): 41-43.

Leicestershire Education Department. 1995. "Education Units Working Together, Leiecestershire County Council, Leicester Department of Education.

Moyles, J., Interviewed, May of 1995. Senior Lecturer, University of Leicester, Department of Teacher Education, Leceister, England.

Woodhead, C. 1995. "Education: The elusive engagement and the continuing frustration." Annual Lecture, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England, The Royal Society of Arts, London, England.

Enclosures

Samples of Key Stage 2 (at eleven years old) Science Assessment, 1995

3 Solids, liquids and gases have different properties.
The chart below shows some of these properties.

Complete the table by ticking (✓) to show the properties of solids, liquids and gases.

The first row has been done for you. Some rows may need more than one tick.

property	solid	liquid	gas
keeps its own shape	✓		
flows easily through a pipe			
can make rigid or stiff structures			
can be squashed into a much smaller volume			
takes the shape of the container into which it is put			

4 Drinking water can be made from salt solution.

(a) To do this you would use **heating** to:

.....

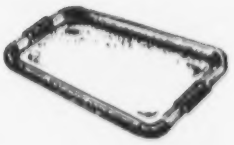
.....

(b) Then you would use **cooling** to:

.....

5 Tick (✓) **ONE** box to complete each sentence:

(a) Plastic is used for trays because it



... is light ☐

... bends ☐

... floats ☐

(b) Wood is used for matches because it

... floats ☐

... snaps ☐

... burns ☐

(c) Steel is used for nails because it

... does not bend easily ☐

... rusts ☐

... is shiny ☐

Sample of English skills and activities from the National Curriculum, Key Stage 2, 1995.

25

KEY STAGE 2 PROGRAMME OF STUDY

Pupils' abilities should be developed within an integrated programme of speaking and listening, reading and writing. Pupils should be given opportunities that interrelate the requirements of the Range, Key Skills, and Standard English and Language Study sections.

Speaking and Listening

1. Range

a Pupils should be given opportunities to talk for a range of purposes, including:

- exploring, developing, and explaining ideas;
- planning, predicting, and investigating;
- sharing ideas, insights and opinions;
- reading aloud, telling and enacting stories and poems;
- reporting and describing events and observations;
- presenting to audiences, live or on tape.

b Pupils should be given opportunities to communicate to different audiences and to reflect on how speakers adapt their vocabulary, tone, pace and style.

c Pupils should be given opportunities to listen and respond to a range of people. They should be taught to identify and comment on key features of what they see and hear in a variety of media.

d Pupils should be given opportunities to participate in a wide range of drama activities, including improvisation, role-play, and the writing and performance of scripted drama. In responding to drama, they should be encouraged to evaluate their own and others' contributions.

2. Key Skills

a Pupils should be encouraged to express themselves confidently and clearly. Pupils should be taught to organise what they want to say, and to use vocabulary and syntax that enables the communication of more complex meanings. In discussions, pupils should be given opportunities to make a range of contributions, depending on the activity and the purpose of the talk. This range should include making exploratory and tentative comments when ideas are being collected together, and making reasoned, evaluative comments as discussion moves to conclusions or action. Pupils should be taught to evaluate their own talk and reflect on how it varies.

b Pupils should be taught to listen carefully, and to recall and re-present important features of an argument, talk, presentation, reading, radio or television programme. They should be taught to identify the gist of an account or the key points made in discussion, to evaluate what they hear, and to make contributions that are relevant to what is being considered. They should be taught to listen to others, questioning them to clarify what they mean, and extending and following up the ideas. They should be encouraged to qualify or justify what they think after listening to other opinions or accounts, and deal politely with opposing points of view.

Sample of science skills and activities from the National Curriculum, Key Stage 2, 1995.

Materials and their Properties

Work on solids, liquids and gases should be related to pupils' observations of changes that take place when materials are heated and cooled, and to ways in which mixtures can be separated.

Pupils should be taught:

1. Grouping and classifying materials

- **a** to compare everyday materials, *eg wood, rock, iron, aluminium, paper, polythene*, on the basis of their properties, including hardness, strength, flexibility and magnetic behaviour, and to relate these properties to everyday uses of the materials;
- **b** that some materials are better thermal insulators than others;
- **c** that some materials are better electrical conductors than others;
- **d** to describe and group rocks and soils on the basis of characteristics, including appearance, texture and permeability;
- **e** to recognise differences between solids, liquids and gases, in terms of ease of flow and maintenance of shape and volume.

2. Changing materials

- **a** that mixing materials, *eg adding salt to water*, can cause them to change;
- **b** that heating or cooling materials, *eg water, clay, dough*, can cause them to change, and that temperature is a measure of how hot or cold they are;
- **c** that some changes can be reversed and some cannot;
- **d** that dissolving, melting, boiling, condensing, freezing and evaporating are changes that can be reversed;
- **e** about the water cycle and the part played by evaporation and condensation;
- **f** that the changes that occur when most materials, *eg wood, wax, natural gas*, are burned are not reversible.

3. Separating mixtures of materials

- **a** that solid particles of different sizes, *eg those in soils*, can be separated by sieving;
- **b** that some solids, *eg salt, sugar*, dissolve in water to give solutions but some, *eg sand, chalk*, do not;
- **c** that insoluble solids can be separated from liquids by filtering;
- **d** that solids that have dissolved can be recovered by evaporating the liquid from the solution;
- **e** that there is a limit to the mass of solid that can dissolve in a given amount of water, and that this limit is different for different solids.